

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01

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FM AMEMBASSY BANGUI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 69

INFO AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY YAOUNDE

C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGUI 0829

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: ECON, PINT, CT

SUBJ: REMEDIES SOUGHT FOR CONTINUING FISCAL PROBLEMS

REF: BANGUI 646

SUMMARY: THE CONTINUING FISCAL CRISIS IS AFFECTING GOVERNMENTAL WORK. BOKASSA HAS REACTED BY ASSIGNING THE ARMY TO MONITOR THE CIVIL SERVICE, AND THERE ARE RENEWED RUMORS OF A SHAKE-UP IN THE GOVERNMENT. END SUMMARY.

1. AS GOCAE FISCAL PROBLEMS DESCRIBED REFTEL CONTINUE, CIVIL SERVANTS ARE SPENDING MORE TIME AWAY FROM THEIR DESKS TRYING TO GET PAID OR HANDLING THEIR PERSONAL BUSINESSES. EXPENDABLES, SUCH AS PAPER, ARE IN EVEN SHORTER SUPPLY THAN USUAL IN THE GOVERNMENT. THE GOVERNMENT'S EFFICIENCY HAS DECLINED.

2. BOKASSA HAS REACTED FIRST BY SPEAKING DIRECTLY APRIL 4 TO VIRTUALLY EVERYBODY IN THE GOVERNMENT WHO HANDLES MONEY AND MOST RECENTLY BY USING THE ARMY TO IMPROVE DISCIPLINE. HIS STERN LECTURE OF APRIL 4, DELIVERED IN THE CONFERENCE ROOM OF THE SAFARI HOTEL, CITED THE EXAMPLE OF A HIGH TAX OFFICIAL FIRED FOR EMBEZZELMENT AND WARNED THAT VIRTUALLY EVERYBODY WAS GUILTY

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OF SOME FORM OR ANOTHER OF MISAPPROPRIATION OF GOVERNMENT FUNDS. BOKASSA THEN PUT THE ARMY INTO THE POST OFFICE, CUSTOMS AND OTHER OFFICES RECEIVING MONEY TO MAKE SURE IT WAS PROPERLY HANDLED. FINALLY, ON APRIL 8 HE WARNED AGAINST "DISORDER, LAZINESS, ABSENTEEISM AND PROFESSIONAL INCOMPETENCE" AND DECREED THAT HENCEFORTH THE ARMY WAS "CHARGED WITH THE MISSION OF EXERCISING A PERMANENT AND SYSTEMATIC CONTROL OF ALL PUBLIC AND PARA-

PUBLIC SERVICES TO DISCOVER AND PUT AN END TO THE CAUSES OF THEIR POOR FUNCTIONING." (COMMENT: THE ARMY IS STILL ONLY IN EVIDENCE AT GOVERNMENT OFFICES WHICH HANDLE MONEY, AND WE DOUBT THAT BOKASSA INTENDS TO HAVE IT INTERVENE IN DAY-TO-DAY GOVERNMENT BUSINESS. HE SEEMS MORE INTERESTED IN INSURING THAT CIVIL SERVANTS COME TO THE OFFICE, STAY SOBER AND WORK. HOWEVER, THEY UNDOUBTEDLY WILL BE EVEN MORE CAUTIOUS THAN USUAL IN MAKING DECISIONS.)

3. PRIME MINISTER PATASSE HAS BEEN ILL SINCE AT LEAST MARCH 29 WITH WHAT IS VARIOUSLY DESCRIBED AS EXHAUSTION, DIABETES AND HEART TROUBLE. THERE ARE STORIES THAT HE ALSO HAD A FALLING OUT WITH THE EMPEROR, AND THERE ARE RENEWED REPORTS THAT HE MAY BE REPLACED, EITHER BY SECOND VICE PRIME MINISTER MAIDOU OR BY SOMEONE FROM OUTSIDE THE GOVERNMENT. BOKASSA MAY BE THINKING OF MAKING PATASSE THE SCAPEGOAT FOR THE FISCAL MESS, AS HE HINTED HE MIGHT WHEN THE GOVERNMENT WAS RUNNING SHORT OF MONEY BEFORE THE CORONATION. THIS PROSPECT, COMBINED WITH THE INTRACTABILITY OF THE FISCAL PROBLEMS THEMSELVES, MAKES IT UNLIKELY THAT ANYONE WILL BE EAGER TO REPLACE PATASSE.

4. DESPITE THE VERY POOR ECONOMIC SITUATION AND THE GOVERNMENT'S VIRTUALLY TOTAL LACK OF FUNDS, ACTIVE DISSATISFACTION DOES NOT APPEAR TO HAVE INCREASED SUBSTANTIALLY. WE HAVE HEARD NO RUMORS OF COUP PLOTTING, ALTHOUGH THERE IS UNDOUBTEDLY INCREASED CYNICISM ABOUT THE NATION'S PRIORITIES AS SET BY THE EMPEROR.
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